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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5964
INFO RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS TUNIS 000076

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DOL/ILAB (MMITTELHAUSER)
STATE FOR DRL/IL AND NEA/MAG (MHAYES, SWILLIAMS)

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ELAB](#) [EIND](#) [ETRD](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [TS](#)
SUBJECT: TUNISIA: WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR INFORMATION

REF: A. STATE 127448
[1](#)B. 08 TUNIS 0206
[1](#)C. 07 TUNIS 1568

[1](#)1. (SBU) The information on Tunisia in the Department of Labor's 2007 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor remains accurate, to the best of Post's knowledge. The Government of Tunisia (GOT) did not respond to Post's requests for information about its activities in this area during 2008.

[1](#)2. (SBU) In February 2008, the Government of Tunisia said it planned to strengthen the existing child protection laws, however, no legislative changes were made during the year. International NGO's in Tunisia told the Embassy that the Government of Tunisia had said in April 2008 that it was intending to withdraw its reservations on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, they have not been able to confirm that the GOT had carried through with its intention and the Tunisian reservations are still listed on the United Nations website.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Local and international NGOs report that government statistics on child labor are generally not publicly available or are disseminated quite late. For example, the Ministry of Women, Family, Children and Elderly Affairs 2007 report on children's issues was distributed to interested organizations the beginning of January 2009 even though the government review process started early in 2008. For 2008, the Ministry submitted its report for review by President Ben Ali before January 11, 2009 and it will go to the High Council for Childhood, headed by the Prime Minister on January 17, 2009. Once it has passed the High Council the report's main recommendations may be published in the newspapers. However, the official publication will probably not occur until near the end of 2009.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The General Union for Tunisian Workers federation does not see child labor as a significant problem in Tunisia. Existing laws requiring children to be in school and outlawing child labor under the age of 16 were generally enforced and provided adequate protection for children. Observers noted the weak point concerned children who are not succeeding in school and drop out making them the most vulnerable group. The government has publicly estimated the number of children who drop-out before finishing secondary school to be about 50,000 per year from a total of about 2 million students. Most of these children stay with their families, however, some end up as "apprentices" in small businesses (mechanics, small stores, and selling jasmine to tourists) or, for girls, working as domestics. The government may be starting to pay closer attention to this issue. UNICEF assisted the government in 2008 to draft a report on street children, which may be released in the second quarter of 2009. There two different types of

Tunisian associations that work with vulnerable children on an individual level, one that focuses on children born out of wedlock and has 10 offices spread around the country, and a second one, the Center of Defense and Social Integration, that also works with children country wide, especially children who have come out of prison.

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